THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

ALERT

News from the UFMCC
on AIDS Legislation, Education, Research and Treatment.

March, 1993

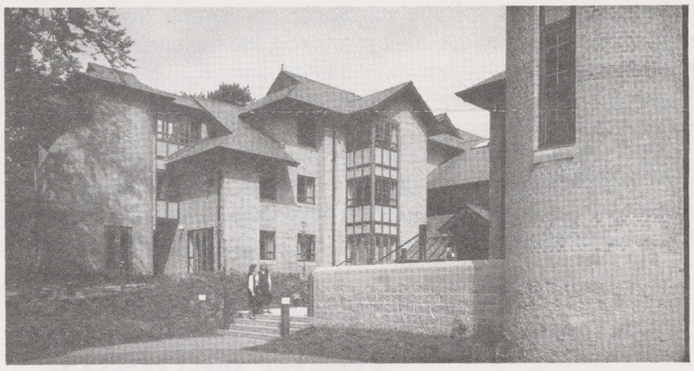
MCC Bournemouth Helps Open AIDS Sanctuary

Rev. Neil Thomas, pastor of MCC Bournemouth, England, has been an active participant in a group known as "Sanctuary," which has opened a residence facility for all persons affected by AIDS.

Sanctuary has struggled since 1990 to find a facility that could offer a safe space, as well as skilled care, for persons affected by AIDS. Their first effort ended in 1991 when Bournemouth's City Council refused permission for a planned hospice which the Council claimed was located in a conservation area. Their second effort, to build onto a Victorian house and open a 20-bed facility, was met with protests from neighbors who feared drug addicts walking through the neighborhood would lower property values.

However, on World AIDS Day, December 1, 1992, Sanctuary was able to open a spacious, up-to-date facility thanks to the generosity of the Sisters of Mercy. The order of Roman Catholic nuns had experienced a decline in numbers, and found that their convent and convalescent home, known as St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Convalescent Home, was not being used to its full potential. The Sisters of Mercy therefore gave Sanctuary a "concessionary lease" with extremely generous terms.

Rev. Steve Pieters, who toured the facility during his visit to the European North Sea District, reports, "The Sanctuary is an incredibly handsome, large facility set in beautifully landscaped grounds. The very feeling of the place is peaceful and healing. The gardens are perfect for quiet meditation. The rooms are simple and beautifully appointed, and they already have the set-up to care for people at all stages of HIV disease. I was extremely impressed, and very proud of Rev. Neil Thomas' part in seeing this facility opened."



Sanctuary resides in this beautiful setting known as St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Convalescent Home.

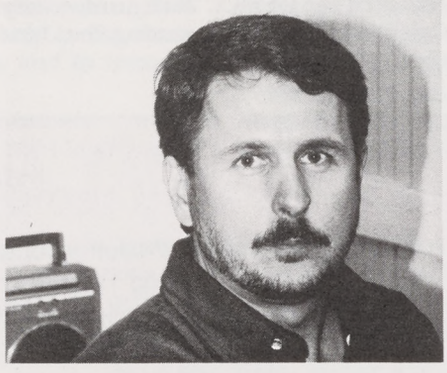
Mr. John-Luke Edwards, the Sanctuary Project Director, elaborates, "This facility will be a sanctuary for all people affected by HIV, whether or not they carry the virus. In addition to the persons living with HIV who need a place to live, we hope that caregivers will come here for retreat, and that families will feel comfortable staying here as well."

Speaking of the Sisters of Mercy, Mr. Edwards continues, "Their commitment to the sick and poor works in unison with the objectives of Sanctuary, which is about a community caring for itself and others. Sanctuary is overwhelmed by their generosity, support and encouragement." Rev. Neil Thomas and MCC Bournemouth can be very proud of their part in providing "Sanctuary" for persons affected by HIV/AIDS. ▼

MCC San Francisco Hires HIV Program Coordinator

MCC San Francisco has hired a half-time HIV Program Coordinator, a position which was announced in the July, 1992 ALERT profile of MCC San Francisco's HIV Program. Mr. Ed Wolf was installed in this new position on January 10, 1993 at the 11 a.m. service of MCC San Francisco.

Ed Wolf comes to his new position with years of experience in the HIV/AIDS field. "In 1983, I answered an ad in a local paper to became a volunteer with Shanti Project, and through them I took some training, and learned some counseling skills. Three years later I walked away from a career as a computer management type, and got a job at San Francisco General Hospital as a counselor on the AIDS unit." After working at the hospital for three and a half years, Wolf went to work for the Shanti Project's volunteer program, doing trainings, and eventually becoming the assistant director of Shanti's volunteer program.



Mr. Ed Wolf, HIV Program Coord.

Wolf continues, "I took six months off in 1992, and spent most of my time up in the mountains. Nature is like a church for me. The summer culminated with a

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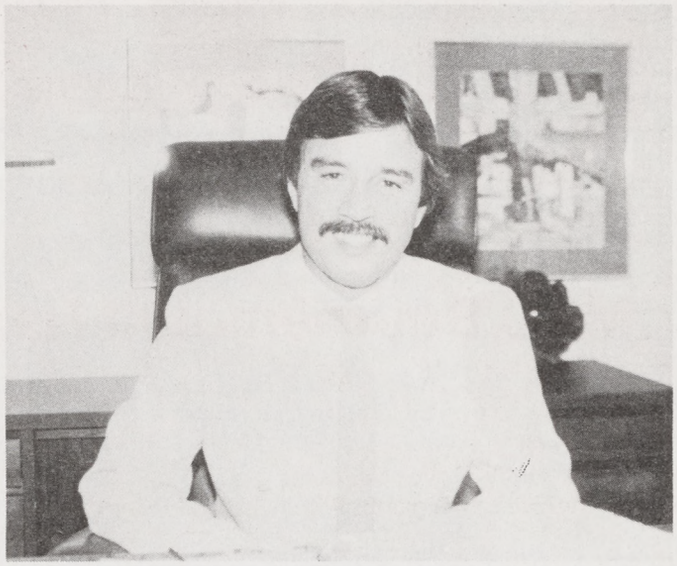
MCC San Diego Hires AIDS Ministry Coordinator

MCC San Diego has hired Rev. Dennis Chappell on a half-time basis as their AIDS Minister. Rev. Chappell follows Rev. Dr. John Pridonoff, who established the HIV support groups at MCC San Diego. Rev. Chappell writes in the February 1993 issue of MCC San Diego's newsletter "Prodigal" that "Dr. John's devotion, insight and clinical training greatly enlightened our understanding of what AIDS ministry is all about."

Rev. Chappell trained and was licensed out of MCC San Diego. He served as Assistant Pastor at MCC Los Angeles from 1978-79, Pastor of St. Luke's MCC of Jacksonville, FL from 1980 to 1982, and Pastor of Christ Chapel MCC of Santa Ana, CA from 1982 to 1990. Prior to joining the staff of MCC San Diego, he worked as the Funeral Coordinator for a large mortuary corporation.

Rev. Chappell will be available for home and hospital visitation, counseling, and planning for funeral and memorial services. He will serve as liaison for MCC with the AIDS Chaplaincy Program as well as all AIDS support organizations in San Diego.

Rev. Chappell is excited to be back in his "home church," working with Rev. David Farrell and Rev. Donna Eubanks. "I will strive to complement their ministries as we work together to bring healing and hope for the congregation in 1993." ▼



Rev. Dennis Chappell, AIDS Ministry Coordinator.

MCC Ocean of Life's AIDS Team Ministry

MCC Ocean of Life in Costa Mesa, CA, has joined with the Orange Coast Unitarian Universalist Church to form The AIDS Team Ministry. Established in Spring, 1992, the ATM is a caring outreach program with the mission of offering such assistance as meal preparation and delivery. They soon will offer shopping, transportation, house cleaning, and pet care as needed by homebound persons living with AIDS. MCC Ocean of Life has 60 members, and is co-pastored by Rev. Susan Dietrick and Rev. Jane Carl. The Unitarian Universalist Church has about 100 members.

The ATM currently draws its clientele from referrals by Orange County AIDS agencies and covers the geographic area of the western part of Orange County.

The Team meets on one Tuesday and one Saturday per month in the kitchen of the Orange Coast Unitarian Universalist Church where, under the guidance of a licensed nutritionist, they prepare one week's worth of frozen microwaveable dinners for each client. They are currently serving three clients.

In a "Facts Sheet" about the new ministry, the Team states, "We are delighted to be part of this outreach ministry and hope that by our efforts we will, in some small way, help our world be a more caring and loving place."

ATM is funded by donations and fundraising efforts, such as a Christmas concert by Robert DeBrot, of MCC Ocean of Life, and by Steven Applegate and Victoria Strong, of MCC in the Valley. The entrance fee for the concert was non-perishable items which stocked the Team's food pantry beyond over flowing. Each church does weekly fundraisers like bake sales, 50/50 drawings, and other such activities.

Recognizing that health concerns in our community are broader than HIV/AIDS, the Board of Directors of MCC Ocean of Life have started a special fund to begin support services for women with breast cancer. The fund already has over $1600, which was collected at a UFMCC 25th Anniversary Celebration Concert featuring Rev. Jane Carl. ▼

Resource For Children, From New York: "Josie's Story: Things To Do and Color

(by Dan Sendzik, New York: MCC of New York, 1993)

"Josie's Story" is a coloring book for children whose parents have AIDS or HIV illness. The book has pictures to color and things to do, and is designed for children ages 5-10. The coloring book can help the child talk about his or her concerns related to the parent's illness. This is an excellent, creative resource for anyone concerned about children who are facing the illness of a parent. It is designed to help the child voice their feelings, as well as teach the child how to help, and what to expect.

For copies or information, contact Rev. Pat Bumgardner, MCC New York, 208 W. 13th St., NY, NY 10011, (212) 242-1212. ▼

ALERT

ALERT is a monthly newsletter containing information on AIDS Legislation, Education, Research and Treatment. The Editor is Rev. Dr. A. Stephen Pieters. For more information, or to send a donation, please write or call: ALERT, c/o UFMCC, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; (213) 464-5100.

HIV/AIDS Conference Alert!

Mark your calendars now for the 1993 U.S. National Skills Building Conference, sponsored by the AIDS National Interfaith Network, the National Association of People with AIDS, and the National Minority AIDS Council. This year's conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency in New Orleans, LA, October 31 - November 3, 1993. There will be a "Big Halloween Blow Out" on October 30, for those arriving the day before the conference begins.

Since UFMCC no longer holds an annual HIV/AIDS conference, the office of UFMCC AIDS Ministry urges members and friends of MCC to take advantage of the National Skills Building Conference. Last year's conference in Washington, DC, attracted close to 1,000 people who work in the HIV/AIDS field. The conference has always received excellent evaluations from participants.

Further information and registration will appear later in the year. If you are not on the mailing list for this conference, contact the National Skills Building Conference at 300 "I" St., N.E., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20002-4389, or telephone (202) 544-1076. ▼

MCC SF Hires HIV Program Coord.

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115-mile hike in the Sierras. This was one of the penultimate experiences in my life. I saw an ad in the paper for this job with MCC, and when I came down from the mountains, there was a message saying they'd like to interview me."

Wolf's first job is to enhance and enlarge the current support group system. Five new groups will be starting with his guidance in February and March. Other duties include counseling, and creating forums and events on HIV-related topics on a quarterly basis. One project that excites Wolf is a time-line of the AIDS epidemic, including the role of the church. The entire congregation is being invited to participate in creating the time-line, which will run the entire length of the social hall.

Wolf likes to emphasize hope in his ministry. He feels there are very few arenas where hope is actively felt and given, but "hope is necessary when everything seems hopeless." Wolf designed an exercise for nurses where he, as facilitator, tried to take their hope away. "I gently made fun of anyone who thought they could have hope, by quoting statistics." But they all had their own private definition of what it meant to have hope when things were seemingly hopeless. Wolf intends to repeat this exercise at a church retreat. ▼

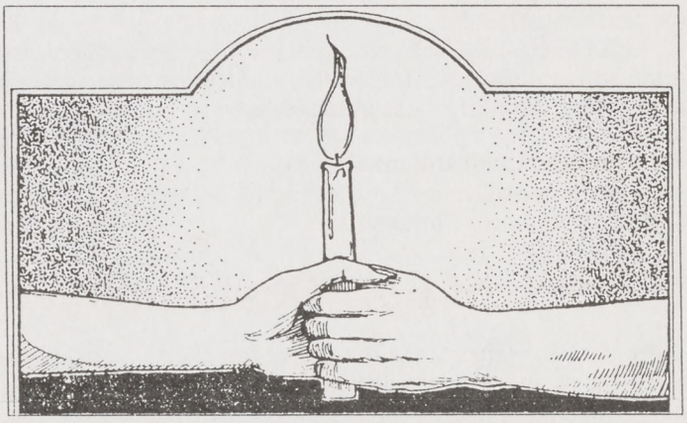
UFMCC Co-Sponsors International Candlelight Vigil Again

Mobilization Against AIDS (MAA) is once again organizing the Annual International AIDS Candlelight Memorial and Mobilization. The event will take place all over the world on May 23, 1993. UFMCC again is one of the International Sponsors of the Candlelight Memorial and Mobilization. MCC's all over the world have been instrumental in organizing these events for years.

According to Amy Saisselin, the international coordinator, the Memorial and Mobilization "is the world's largest simultaneous observance honoring the memory of persons with AIDS and demonstrating support for people living with AIDS. The memorials have occurred in over 220 cities in 35 countries...They range from small gatherings in houses of worship to huge candlelight marches that pass through city centers." In addition to giving a public opportunity for expressions of grief and support, the Memorials also serve as an excellent vehicle for HIV/AIDS education in many cities.

The Candlelight Sister City program is the primary means of making these annual observances into a dynamic, year-round system of cooperation among grassroots AIDS organizations. Mobilization Against AIDS asks cities in developed, wealthy countries to twin with those in Third World regions. The Sister City program is a tremendous help to the struggling twinned community both financially and in terms of boosting its morale.

MAA has also initiated a "First Families Campaign," where the leaders of a country, state or city are invited to participate



in the Memorial, and also place candles in the windows of their official residence. Last year, U.S. President and Mrs. Bush placed lit candles in the windows of the White House the evening of the event.

For more information, or to contribute to the Annual International AIDS Candlelight Memorial and Mobilization, contact: Amy Saisselin, Mobilization Against AIDS, 1540 Market Street, Suite 160, San Francisco, CA 94102, phone (415) 863-4676, FAX (415) 863-4740. ▼

Medical Notes: Benefits of ddI and AZT

For certain HIV-infected individuals, the relative effectiveness of ddI and AZT in slowing the progression of HIV disease depends on the duration of their previous AZT therapy, according to a recently completed study sponsored by NIAID and Bristol-Myers Squibb Co.

"In this study, AZT appeared to be the more effective drug among HIV-infected patients with advanced disease who had not taken AZT previously, while ddI appeared to be the more effective drug among those with previous AZT use of at least eight to 16 weeks," says Raphael Dolin, M.D., Univ. of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry and principal investigator of the study.

"Physicians who care for HIV-infected patients should discuss this new data with the patient to plan the best treatment", says A. Fauci, MD NIAID Dir. ▼

Scientists Attend Think Tank For Immune Restoration in AIDS

On the weekend of January 23, 1993, approximately thirty of the world's leading AIDS researchers gathered in Rutherford, CA at the estate of Francis Ford Coppola to develop a strategic research agenda to restore the immune systems of people with advanced AIDS. The meeting was assembled by Project Inform to focus attention on restoring immunity in late-stage HIV, especially by methods other than direct antiviral to HIV. "What made this conference unique," said Martin Delaney, Founding Director of Project Inform, "is that the community was able to pull together what government and industry were never able to create, a strategic plan for developing treatments for AIDS. This conference will have more impact on the lives of people living with AIDS than any other scientific meeting which will take place this year."

Meeting participants included government, academic and industry researchers and clinicians, along with a representative of the FDA and selected community activists. Steering committees were established to create two detailed plans to develop immune restoration therapies for late stage HIV disease. Both plans combine basic research with clinical trials. "These plans offer a rational, directed, and most importantly, doable program for dealing with the immune loss in AIDS. Such efforts go a long way toward restoring optimism in people in late stage disease about the development of therapies for them," said Jesse Dobson, Director of Project Inform's Project Immune Restoration.

Scientists at the meeting were enthusiastic about the possibilities discussed. Nobel prize winner Dr. David Baltimore praised the meeting saying that such meetings should have been taking place for the last twelve years. Researchers agreed that focused cooperation was the best approach to developing therapies. Some researchers felt that other participants would be needed to implement the plan. "If we don't get the same sort of collaborative support from the pharmaceutical companies and regulatory agencies, these plans will be difficult, if not impossible, to move forward at a reasonable speed," said Dr. John Dwyer, an AIDS researcher from the University of South Wales in Australia.

Based on the success of the meeting, Project Inform is considering sponsoring meetings to promote furthering other areas of HIV research.

NIAID Begins First Test of Novel HIV Peptide Vaccine

The U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) has begun the first human trials of an experimental vaccine containing several copies of a chemically synthesized protein fragment, or peptide, of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

The Phase I trial will examine the product's safety and immune-stimulating ability in 36 uninfected men and women at low risk of HIV infection. Volunteers between the ages of 18 and 60 are being recruited in St. Louis, MO, and Rochester, NY, through NIAID's AIDS Vaccine Clinical Trials Network, says study coordinator Geoffrey Gorse, MD, of the St. Louis University School of Medicine.

The NIAID trial will evaluate three doses of the vaccine. For each dose, 10 volunteers will be chosen at random to receive the vaccine containing alum adjuvant, a substance that boosts specific immune responses. Two volunteers will receive a placebo, alum alone. Each volunteer will receive a primary injection into the muscle and booster shots one and six months later. Doctors will immunize volunteers with the low-dose vaccine first and move to the next higher dose only after determining that the lower dose is safe.

For more information about the trial, call the AIDS Clinical Trials Information Service at 1-800-TRIALS-A, open weekdays 9:00 am to 7:00 pm EST. ▼

Source of Low-Cost Supplies

Nonprofit organizations that serve the ill and disabled can receive new supplies at minimal cost, through a 16-year-old corporate gifts program. Available items include office and computer supplies, janitorial and maintenance goods, audio and video tapes, arts and crafts, clothing, paper products, and personal care items.

The program is administered by a nonprofit organization called NAEIR, the National Association for the Exchange of Industrial Resources.

Participating agencies pay $645 annual dues, to cover NAEIR's overhead, plus shipping and handling. The products themselves are free, and NAEIR says members receive an average of $7,000 worth of new goods a year. Participants choose what they need from 300-page catalogs issued every ten weeks. A computer decides who gets what. All first-year participants are protected through a moneyback guarantee. For a free information packet call 1-800-562-0955, or write: NAEIR, Dept. HG-2; 560 McClure Street, Galesburg, IL 61401. ▼

The 1993 March on Washington

For Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation

Schedule of UFMCC Events

Saturday, April 24

11 a.m.	"The Wedding". In front of the IRS Building on Constitution Avenue between 10th and 11th Streets, NW. Reception immediately following the Wedding.
until 3:30 p.m.	Reception for Wedding-Goers at Tracks, 1111 First Street, SE.
5-7 p.m.	Reception for Dianne Feinstein and other political leaders at MCC Washington, DC, 474 Ridge Street, NW.

Sunday, April 25

8:30 a.m.	Communion Service at Lincoln Memorial.
12:00 Noon	THE MARCH
7:30 p.m.	Sunday Worship Service at MCC Washington, DC, 474 Ridge Street, NW.